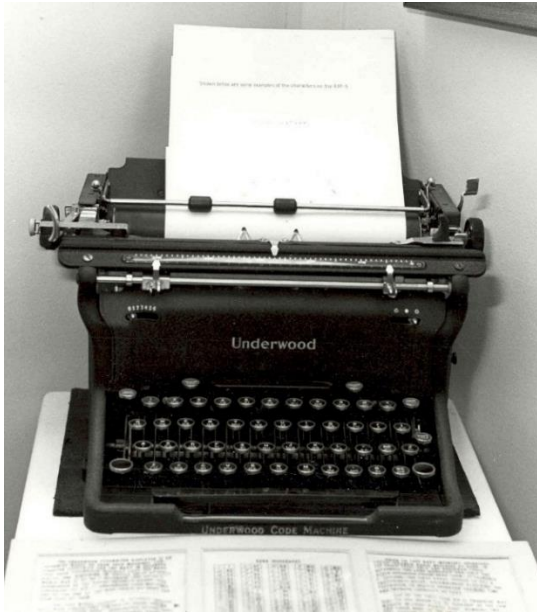


POUNDING THE KEYS September 4



Until the 1970s, a high percentage of COMINT collection or transcription was “copied” on manual typewriters. This meant an intercept operator or transcriber had to be able to type fast and accurately.

In addition, operators had to hit each key strongly so it would be legible on all levels of six-ply paper. Each sheet in the six-ply had a different color to signify its distribution, and each sheet was backed by a piece of carbon paper, which made the inked imprint on the next sheet --- and thickened the packet on the typewriter roller.

The introduction of electric typewriters in the 1970s meant the operator still had to type fast and accurately, but the letter keys were powered by the machine itself. Thus, the operator didn’t have to strike each key very hard. In fact, for veteran intercept operators, it sometimes then took effort not to hit a key with too much force.

502 CAPTION: a manual typewriter with a sheet of paper in the roller.